

WHOSE LAND VALUE?



LAND VALUE AND EXTRACTION IN HACKNEY

I have been dreaming about the Nightingale Estates for over a year now. Still now one stands curtained from change. They are legendary buildings in Hackney's consciousness, even though the second last one was felled in 2003. They were only 40 years old at the time.

They were considered dark and dangerous places soon after they fell into disrepair, so why am I nostalgic for them? Is it the old punks still hanging around the canal regaling me with stories of getting Ketty in Hackney Downs watching the controlled explosions? Is it my own connections to Jungle and Rave and chases between Rush FM and Kool FM, Pirate Radio Stations constantly giving Stokey Police the run around? Is it the jaded dreams of the Angry Brigade, out of prison and into a new and unfamiliar world? Their decrepitude, modifications and destruction are representative of the enormous change in the borough, and with it, the explosion in Land and Capital Value in Hackney. As an anarchist, I piss on these definitions of value.

In the 20 years since those towers came down, Hackney Downs has become a much safer place. But for who? The people that lived in those blocks have long since been pushed out of borough. Those blocks have been replaced by giant Yuppie equivalents with a fraction of the available housing. The Council are now

building only 50 council houses on the remaining waste land. In 20 years, the value of the council flats nearby have exploded by 1000% - whose value is this? Not the council tenants on the block, or the council's which cannot afford to buy them back. The corner shops constantly increase their prices beyond the point of inflation and hire staff to run their petit bourgeois empires. Is this an increase in value for the poor and disabled? Is it fuck. The Capital value of Land has exploded in Hackney and none of these people have benefited. As the Cost of Living bites these differences become starker. The economic and social values that have defined these changes have not worked in the people's favour, and so it is our duty as Social Anarchists to create alternative visions.

My partner tells me that it is a particularly British sensibility to think of change as a negative. But I see all of these changes as cleansing of a flawed community and the production of an anodyne Hackney. Hackney is safer, greener, prettier and emptier. Some individuals have got much much wealthier, and those who have moved to the borough are much much wealthier and this begs the question: what does Hackney mean? When you change a place, who do you change it for? Whose conception of value does this represent? The estates stay the same whilst their economic value increases and their inhabitants become whiter and richer. The

new builds stay empty as they sway in their wind and profits explode. But Hackney is not just these places.

The city has always been a place of ephemerality which stands still for no person. This will not change as long as people freely associate in such large, ungovernable conglomerations. But Capital is not and should not be the only directive of change, and the physical and cultural emptying of our homes in favour of investment capital is not the only possible future. It is our role as Anarchists to propose alternative models of Community value, on the terms of the people living here, away from Land Speculation and Gentrification. A Radical Positive Change is still possible in the inner city. But it is not enough to just write this into existence, rather that we publicise and act on our alternative visions of the future. The dream is not yet dead and it is up to us to see it through!

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Suggested reading:

Welcome Thinner City – Colin Ward

Dica and Ben Intellect – Can't Stop the Pirates (Weekend Rush)

Tec and Kektex – Hackney Council are a Bunch of Cunts

CLIMATE CRISIS: A FRAMEWORK FOR DOMINATION



Some of the official figures about climate change are shocking; atmospheric CO2 has doubled since the 1800's from fossil fuel burning and deforestation; the resulting greenhouse effect has increased average global temperatures by 1°C. Human activity has caused mass extinction of animal species by 68% since 1970. Vast areas of the planet are rapidly becoming deserts, and humans are changing the surface of the planet with such intensity, that geologists today talk about a new geological era, the Anthropocene, from the Greek word 'Anthropos' that means human.

Governments are promoting the use of green technologies to replace the existing dirty ones that heat our homes, transport us, and produce our food and goods. Climate change campaigns and the left political parties have been demanding a reform, asking governments to put the leash on the financial corporations that extract and consume fossil fuel.

But governments will not do a thing to stop the racist, patriarchal, extractive, colonialist dance of the Capitalist/ State dynamic. Their devastating spin has been accelerating in the last century, arriving at today's limit where the 'development' of every corner of the planet is needed to preserve the modern-day lifestyle for the privileged few. The ever-present Nation (and Religious) State is dominating on all living forms; whoever does not conform or cannot be part of the development plan will have to step aside or die. And the transition from fossil fuel to green energy is just necessary to preserve the life of this death machine – it must keep expanding or it dies itself.

Uprisings and revolutions have been resisting authoritarian rule in all its forms throughout history. But it seems that all these struggles have yet to create a global anti-authoritarian class consciousness. At the same time, the ruling elites are focusing on creating an international framework around the subject of climate change. The climate crisis is the issue that capitalist societies will have to coordinate

their focus on, so they can centre the trees and lose the forest.

This is an attempt to shape a global ecological consciousness of the worker-consumer-voter. To achieve this, the State-Corporation alliance uses the two dominant political alternatives, the Left (Green New Deal, identity, human rights) and the Right (climate change denial, nationality, religion). These are presented as the 'only realistic viewpoints' about what the future should be like, opposing each other: one for reform, the other for conservation; there is no

space for voices against the State and the Corporation, because that would threaten social peace; these voices must be silenced.

Away from the metropolitan centres of the present day, communities have always been revolting against the annihilation of their local ecosystems. It is worth acknowledging that most of the times they've done so without following a political blueprint that was brought to them by an illuminated activist vanguard. Instead, there may be many lessons to be learned from these local struggles happening on the ground, about how to nurture and heal,

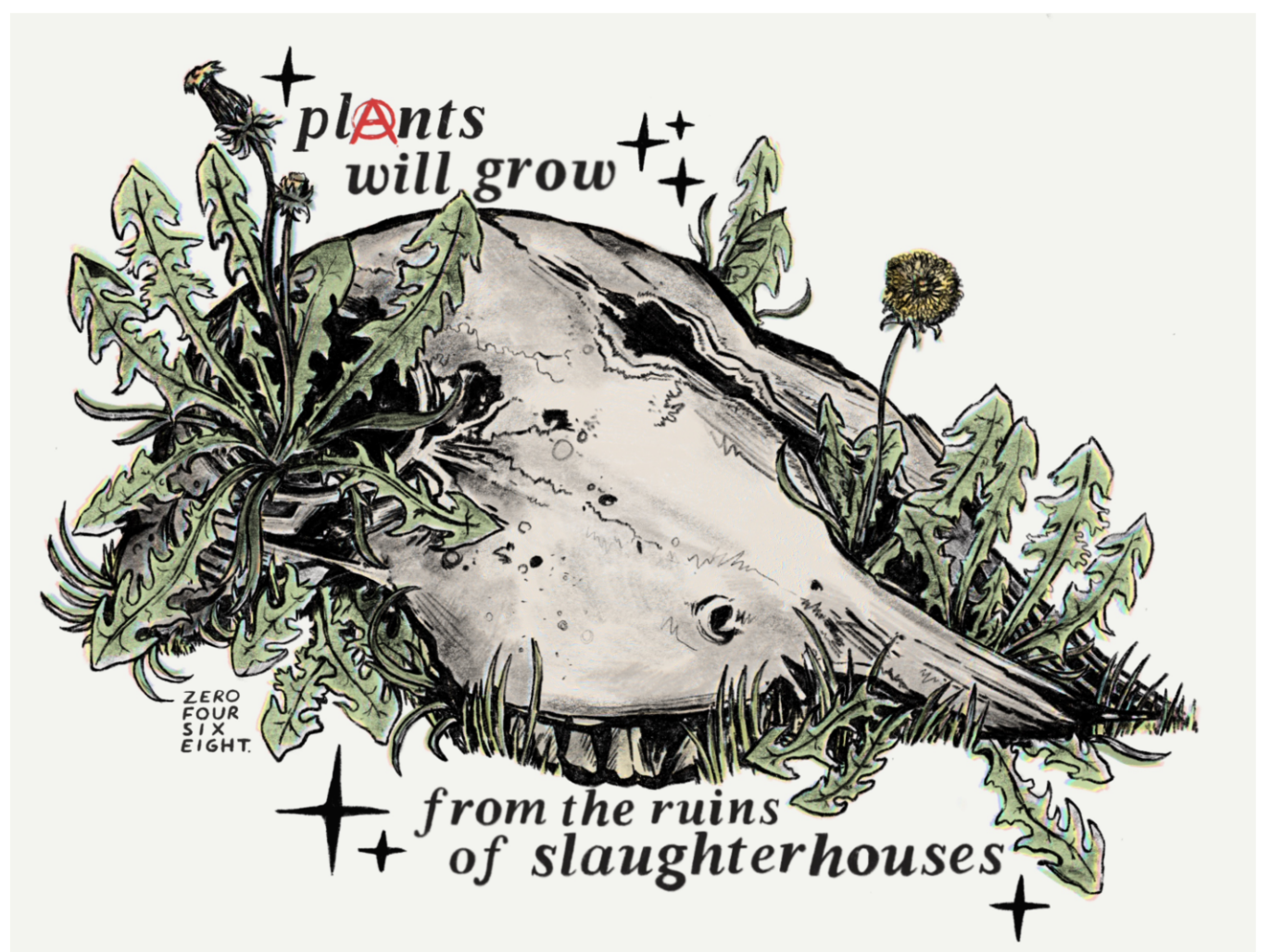
how to co-exist and complement, how to cultivate and give space for growth.

There is an incredibly vast number of different ecosystems, as there is of living beings, and each one survives with a celebration of diversity and heterogeneity. The struggle to survive is a struggle to grow in our own uniqueness and this may entail to recognise diverse forms of resistance against various forms of oppression. What brings us together is not the power of unity, but the recognition of intersecting lines of coercion and struggle: a decentralised insurgency that itself exposes the intersectionality of different forms of oppression, such as white supremacy, patriarchy, wage slavery, extraction, colonialism, capitalism, etc.

Life on earth has been around for millennia and in our time many ecosystems are fighting for survival. A variety of tactics are being deployed around the world including sabotage, obstructions, and uprisings. These revolutionary waves often achieve real victories, stopping the eco-devastation and creating space for healing. We will keep fighting where we live, from the cities to the countryside, building networks of solidarity and hope.

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Suggested reading: 'The Solutions Are Already Here: Tactics for Ecological Revolution from Below' by Peter Gelderloos



S A B O T A G E !

We all know that the so-called “peace” of “civil society” is in fact a brittle chaos both caused and maintained by baton and gun, work and poverty— physical and structural violence. We are always already in a state of war— class war.

Peaceful protest and non-violence are effective, of course, and favourable absolutely. But they're also often a privilege. Non violent resistance requires limited state repression and it also requires an audience. It is also often an option only for those who face fewer repercussions, legal or physical.

We are fortunate enough to not have to engage in violent resistance (self-defence) against murderous state repression... at least not yet. However, structural violence is ever present, in the form of coercive work, real and potential poverty, racial and sexual discrimination, austerity, neoliberal policy, environmental damage and public health. To name a few.

One effective remedy is the anarchists favourite pastime... sabotage! Destroying pipelines and machines, derailling armament trains and smashing security cameras are all obvious examples. In a world of structural violence, property damage is also a kind of self-defence and is effective in three main ways:

1. Sabotage can immediately ameliorate the damage of structural violence and alleviate harm to individuals, communities and the earth.
2. Sabotage can act as effective propaganda to those unaware or otherwise indifferent. (If done well)
3. Sabotage literally and ideologically undermines the principle axiom of power: the sanctity of property. It reveals that property is always already violence (as much as it is theft).

We see structural violence in child poverty, super-yachts and ecological collapse. But we also see it in literal **structures** in the urban landscape, in borders and fences, in surveillance cameras and in subtler ways on almost every street. We see it in hostile architecture. Additionally, the saturation of advertisement is a kind of psychological assault.

A lot of it goes unnoticed... Why are bus-stop benches like that? How many arm rests does a park bench need? What is the purpose of a grid of metal studs and spikes outside a bank? ... To punish the homeless.

Homelessness is structural violence *par excellence*, serving as a threat and a punishment and, of course, is itself an invention of structural violence. Even within capitalism it is unnecessary, with almost no effort it could be ended overnight (as happened in covid). However it is congenital to capitalism and

functional. It is both the method and the goal of capitalism.

It is a crime against humanity.

There are ways of destroying hostile architecture. Hammers, chisels and hacksaws work. For more stubborn instalments: a dowsing of paint can be costly and difficult to clean, especially if it keeps happening. It's probably easier for the state and big business to just remove the stuff and let people sleep. There are many methods available to anarchists and we ought to think creatively about ways of attacking hostile architecture. We can add another point to our list since this form of sabotage not only helps the homeless in an immediate way but helps us all in a general way.

4. Sabotage is a way of reclaiming space from structures of violence. Spaces that have been stolen from us and belong to us all.

Andreas Malm in *How To Blow Up A Pipeline* talks of property violence being most effective when parallel with a mass movement. This is true of industrial sabotage. Small acts of sabotage on hostile architecture are, I think,

quite different: they are functional independent of a mass movement. He also talks of property violence as constituting a “radical flank” that can serve to steer the wider movement both practically and ideologically. Small local sabotage can perhaps aid in fomenting a larger movement. So we can add:

5. Sabotage can act as practical and ideological pressure.

These points apply to what we might call “constructive sabotage”. For example, re-wilding green spaces or growing vegetables, creating free food banks, making street art etc. Reclaiming both private and public spaces from state and corporations for the good of all is a kind of *positive* sabotage. And as any anarchist knows destroying systems of power goes hand in hand with creating the systems of freedom of a new just society. So:

6. Sabotage, destructive and constructive, can show that another world is possible and is itself creating the germs of a fairer better world.

Inequality is violence. Property is violence. Smash the state. Smash capitalism.



BETWEEN A CUCUMBER, A SALAD AND A SMOOTHIE: LIVING THE ANARCHIST UTOPIA?

What's cool about anarchism is that every anarchist will think and do it differently. From communalists, to individualists, to anarcho-syndicalists, to spiritualists, to abolitionists, to nihilists, to anarcho-feminists, to the black block. One of the common quests of this anarchist pluralism appears to be finding the balance between the personal and the collective, or otherwise the quest of figuring out how to make a salad. We do not seem to want the totalitarian rule of the cucumber or the communist rule of the smoothie. Cucumber and smoothie share the rule of the one way of being in the world. It means we all must conform to one way of being, be that what may, and ruler included. The rule of the one means (a fight for) the absolute power of the one which means hierarchical organising (since all other forms of being need to be either eliminated or subjugated to that one). It also means misery, boredom, disillusionment and things like inadequacy,

shame, guilt, self-hate when we are not scoring high in performing that one way. It also means loneliness; the one cannot but be lonely. One example of the 'one' that brings all of these lovely feelings in collective organising, is the rule of theoretical knowledge. This rule is also called vanguardism, but that's a Marxist dream, no?

The rule of the one is definitely not fun but is having power fun? Could we do without it in an anarchist utopia and on the way there? Some people seem to enjoy power but in the end power and its appetite for cruel games seems to create a lot of misery. Everything becomes either a confrontation or a negotiation. It is all about winners and losers. It is as if even in our collectives we are in constant state of war. It also seems to be getting in the way of making an anarchist salad; any way you theorise it, what it brings in the end is pain, and embodied rigidity, or some sort of

market (transactional) experience. It seems to take us back to the rule of the cucumber or the smoothie. Can we think not in terms of confrontation, transactions, and winning and losing?

Making an anarchist salad would mean that all the ingredients of that specific salad stay distinct while they are part of the salad. There would be no fights for winning or losing in an anarchist salad since there would be equality and freedom. No ingredient will try to dominate in the salad by excluding other ingredients or subjugating them. Each ingredient would be a happy participant of a collective. If an ingredient would start moving towards creating a cucumber or a smoothie state, then the rest would give the salad a good mix. The other ingredients would offer some aid and remind it of the joy that lies in a salad and in no domination. Since the spirit of the salad is equality, freedom and no domination, we could also say that all ingredients have equal power. If that stands, then there would be no point in talking about power in talking about an anarchist salad. There would be a joyful a(n)-archy between ingredients. There would be no talk about the inescapability of power inequalities in the salad. There would be a weaving between all the ingredients. We would see the beauty of each ingredient, and we would see the beauty of the salad. No need for power and its inescapable inequalities. Too utopian?

Salad already happens in our collective organising even though we sometimes fall for the cucumber or smoothie state. It happens when in taking decisions, thinking, and feeling together, not only we allow space for all propositions to be heard and be heard as if disconnected from their conventional power status, but more so when we find ingenious ways to weave them all in what we do, personally and as a collective. It happens when we say "yes, and" rather than "yes, but". It happens when we are not fixated in thoughts of better/ worse, more/ less, good/ bad and friend/ enemy. It happens when we weave in fast, and slow, and theory, and intuition, and rules, and experience, and process, and results, and joy, and injustice, and humour, and spontaneity, and dreaming, and strategy, and animals, and flowers, and the air we breathe. A pickle? Or a way to have fun together while doing serious anarchist shit?

